

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9354
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PBOR, PINT, IS, JO, XF
SUBJECT: WEST BANK REACTION TO "EQUAL SERVICES" ANNOUNCEMENT

REF: JERUSALEM 1289, JERUSALEM 1280

1. SUMMARY. GENERAL WEST BANK REACTION TO GOI
AUGUST 14 CABINET DECISION TO EXTEND EQUAL SERVICES
TO OCCUPIED TERRITORIES HAS BEEN TO (1) LABEL IT
A POLITICAL ACT AND REJECT BEGIN'S CHARACTERIZATION
AS HUMANITARIAN; (2) SEE IT AS ANOTHER MENACING
STEP ON THE ROAD TO DE FACTO AND POSSIBLE DE JURE
ANNEXATION; AND (3) REGARD IT AS DIRECT CHALLENGE
TO U.S. POLICY. THIS REACTION IS VIRTUALLY UNANIMOUS
AMONG MAYORS, NOTABLES AND PRESS. END SUMMARY.

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2. POST HAS REPORTED PRESS REACTION IN REFTELS.
THIS REACTION WAS UNPRECEDENTLY SWIFT AND REMARKABLY
UNIFORM FROM MODERATE AL QUDS TO LEFTIST AL FAJR. IT
HAS POINTED OUT THAT THE EXISTING JORDANIAN LEGAL REGIME
WHICH HAS BEEN LARGELY LEFT IN PLACE SINCE 1967 IS IN
DANGER OF BEING COMPLETELY REPLACED BY ISRAELI REGULATION.
AS ASH'AB SAID, AUGUST 17, BEGIN'S DECISION "WILL

CHANGE THE COURSE OF LIFE IN THE WEST BANK AND THE GAZA TRIP." THIS DECISION IS SEEN AS MAKING CLEAR THAT ISRAEL IS DETERMINED TO HOLD ONTO THE WEST BANK AND GAZA.

3. WHILE REACTION FROM THE PRESS WAS SWIFT AND TRENCANT, WEST BANK MAYORS HAVE TENDED TO HOLD THEIR FIRE. HEBRON'S MAYOR QAWSIMA WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT ISRAEL'S DECISION WOULD BE WELCOME IF IT WAS TRULY HUMANITARIAN. QAWSIMA SUBSEQUENTLY CHANGED HIS TUNE. THE ONLY OTHER MAYOR TO MAKE A PUBLIC COMMENT HAS BEEN NABLUS' MAYOR SHA'KA WHO MADE BRIEF STATEMENT CHARACTERIZING DECISION AS ANNEXATION IN DISGUISE.

4. TULKARM'S MAYOR HILMI HANNUN TOLD CONGEN OFFICER AUGUST 17 THAT HE AND THE OTHER MAYORS WERE STILL UNSURE OF WHAT THE GOI DECISION ENTAILED. THE MAYOR HAD MET WITH THE MILGOV PREVIOUS DAY AND WAS TOLD THAT, LIKE MOST EVERYONE ELSE, THE IDF HAD LEARNED OF THE DECISION FROM THE MEDIA. THE UNCERTAINTY HAS MUTED THE MAYORS' RESPONSE, BUT HANNUN HIMSELF INTERPRETED THE DECISION AS A STEP IN ANNEXATION OF THE WEST BANK. ALTHOUGH AN INCREASE IN SERVICES PER SE WAS NOT OBJECTIONABLE, HANNUN SAID ANY CHANGE IN JORDANIAN LAW WOULD INDICATE A CHANGE IN THE POLITICAL STATUS OF THE WEST BANK AND WOULD BE RESISTED.

5. MAYORS MAY BE WITHHOLDING PUBLIC COMMENT BECAUSE OF RECENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ISRAELI WARNING TO REFRAIN FROM POLITICAL STATEMENTS. IT IS CLEAR, HOWEVER, ALSO THAT SUDDEN AND IMPRECISE ISRAELI ANNOUNCEMENT CAUGHT THEM BY SURPRISE AND THEY ARE STILL TRYING TO DISCOVER WHAT GOI REALLY INTENDS TO DO AND HOW AND WHEN DECISION MAY BE IMPLEMENTED.

6. WITH REGARD TO REFUGEE SERVICES, UNWRA'S JERUSALEM AREA OFFICER TONY BAKERJIAN IS SUSPICIOUS OF GOI INTENT AND FEARFUL OF THE RESULTS OF THE EQUALIZATION DECISION IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS. ACCORDING TO BAKERJIAN, THE JERUSALEM MUNICIPALITY HAS ALREADY BEEN INTERFERING IN THE SHU'AFAT CAMP (INCLUDED IN THE EXTENDED CITY LIMITS) TO ENCOURAGE REFUGEES THROUGH FINANCIAL INCENTIVES TO LEAVE "TEMPORARY" SHELTERS AND SETTLE PERMANENTLY ELSEWHERE, THUS DE-POLITICIZING THEM AND UNDERCUTTING UNRWA'S AUTHORITY. THIS POLICY, BAKERJIAN BELIEVES, COULD SERVE AS A PRECEDENT FOR THE LIKUD THROUGHOUT THE WEST BANK.
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